

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

BEN-HUR: A Tale of the Christ. By LEW. WALLACE. 12mo, pp. 552. Harper & Brothers.

The idea upon which General Wallace has constructed his novel is a bold one. He has made the life, miracles and death of our Lord the ostensible foundation of a romance of adventure. His book is quite different in design from the ordinary religious story, in which the personages of the Scripture narratives are pressed into the uses of didactic or controversial fiction. The chief characters in this "tale of the Christ" have little connection with the incidents recorded in the Gospels; and although the action moves slowly, but regularly forward toward the conversion of the hero and his return to Christianity, the work is really not a religious, but an archaeological novel. The figure of the Saviour is but seldom and lightly touched, and the diversion with which General Wallace has refrained from a too familiar handling of sacred things has saved him from a great danger. Whenever he does attempt to interweave with his story a scene from the Bible his style, glowing and rapid as it is at other times, becomes constrained and almost cold. He copies the language of the Evangelists as far as may be, and hurried away into the more congenial realms of imagination, as if conscious how greatly inferior his ornate paraphrases must be to the simple originals. There is a singular example of this in the chapters relating to the nativity and the coming of the Wise Men and the shepherds to Bethlehem. Here General Wallace has ventured upon many pages of elaborate narrative; and the impression left upon the reader is that St. Matthew and St. Luke made the story much more beautiful. We have said that the life of Christ is the ostensible foundation of the novel. Its real basis is a description of the life of the Jews and Romans at the beginning of the Christian era, and this is both forcible and brilliant. We are carried through a surprising variety of scenes; we witness a sea-fight, a chariot-race, the internal economy of a Roman galleys, domestic interiors at Antioch, at Jerusalem, and among the tribes of the desert, palaces, prisons, the haunts of dissipated Roman youth, the houses of pious families of Israel; there is plenty of exciting incident; everything is animated, vivid and glowing; and if the style is too rhetorical for a fastidious taste, and the desire for sensation a little too apparent, there is no question that the book is one to be read with interest and with profit.

A DREAMER. By KATHARINE WYLDE. Leisure Hours Series. 16mo, pp. 452. Henry Holt & Co.

This is a sombre and intensely tragic story which ends with marriage and happiness, the only gleam of cheerfulness in the entire book breaking out on the last pages. Yet it is by no means the repulsive creation of fancy which this characterization might lead one to suppose. The characters are drawn with a free and vigorous hand, the incidents are naturally and ingeniously arranged, and the disasters and complications of the tale follow as if by necessity from the sins and errors of the persons concerned in the action. Philip Temple is a man who wastes his youth in idle and obstinate dreaming; he will not adopt any useful calling; he revels in acute and entertaining paradoxes; he expends his brilliant powers in the composition of chemical pamphlets. With excellent impulses and a capacity, as he proves under temptation, for a lofty kind of virtue, he is nevertheless the ruin of his best friends and the cause of unnumbered agonies. The moral of the book is a warning to people of ill-regulated habits that they may do more evil than the absolutely vicious; but Miss Wylde has wisely been content to let this truth sink quietly into the minds of her public without a set application of it, and Philip's reformation is left to inference rather than described. It must be confessed that she makes her hero a singularly unattractive person, and the fascination which he exercises over the dramatic person is not put forth for the benefit of the spectators. His picture, however, is drawn with great skill. Griselda Mortimer is a charming and poignant creation, of whom the reader will never grow tired, and the treatment of some of the subordinate characters, such as Agnes and Oliver, shows remarkable powers of observation and knowledge of human nature. The difficult ending is managed with admirable art.

THE HISTORY OF MUSIC, from the Christian Era to the Present Time. By Dr. FREDERIC LOUIS RITTER. Second Edition, revised and augmented. 12mo, pp. xii, 475. London: William Reeves.

Professor Ritter has published in England, but not yet in America, a new and considerably enlarged edition of a work which we have more than once had a welcome opportunity to commend. His "History of Music in the Form of Lectures" originally appeared in Boston and New-York in two small volumes, the first issued in 1870, the second in 1874. The lecture form has now been discarded; a better division by chapters has taken its place; the work has been considerably enlarged and arranged in one volume with an index, and seventy-two engraved plates of musical examples have been added as a supplement. The most important of the new matter relates to the early history of the art, a branch of the subject in which the superiority of Dr. Ritter's work to all other brief compendiums in our language is especially marked. Among the musical examples are moreover to be found specimens of ancient composers which possess a very high antiquarian interest, and which the student will hardly know how to look for elsewhere. An account of the ancient system of *meum nota* embodies the substance of an important illustrated paper which Dr. Ritter published in THE TRIBUNE in 1875. We know of no short History of Music in English comparable to this in accuracy and thoroughness, and we know of none which approaches it in interest. Dr. Ritter has found an audience in every country, and without formality, and how to import to students something more important than a catalogue of names and dates by his free, forcible and stimulating criticism.

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